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Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the thirty-sixth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Council resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2258 (2015), and paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2332 (2016) in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground, from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, other Syrian sources and open sources. Data from United Nations agencies on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 31 January 2017.

Box 1
Key points in January 2017

(1) The ceasefire that went into effect on 30 December continued to hold and, despite a number of notable breaches, including in Idlib and Rif Dimashq, resulted in a reduction in fighting during the month.

(2) January was the first month, since the institution of the International Syria Support Group and its Task Force on Humanitarian Access, during which not a single inter-agency cross-line convoy from the humanitarian convoy plan was deployed, the principal obstacles to their deployment including insecurity, lack of administrative approvals and disagreement among the parties to the Four Towns ceasefire agreement covering Zabadani, Madaya, Fu'ah and Kafraya and surrounding areas. The only inter-agency convoy that delivered aid (reaching Mu'addamiyah al-Sham on 7 January) had been approved under the November convoy plan.

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(3) An estimated 1.8 million inhabitants of Aleppo and the surrounding eastern countryside (including Manbij and Bab) had their water cut on 14 January owing to a technical problem at the water pumping station, which is located in territory held by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

(4) Following fierce fighting, which led to the displacement of over 17,500 people in the Wadi Barada area, on 28 January a ceasefire was reached between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups. A total of 1,925 fighters and family members evacuated from Wadi Barada to Idlib on 29 January. The agreement also allowed technical teams to enter the water facility, enabling the resumption of limited water supply to Damascus.

(5) An ISIL offensive on Dayr al-Zawr that began on 15 January has effectively cut the besieged enclave in the western part of the city in two. World Food Programme (WFP) airdrops were halted between 15 and 28 January, as the drop zone became inaccessible and a new location had to be identified.

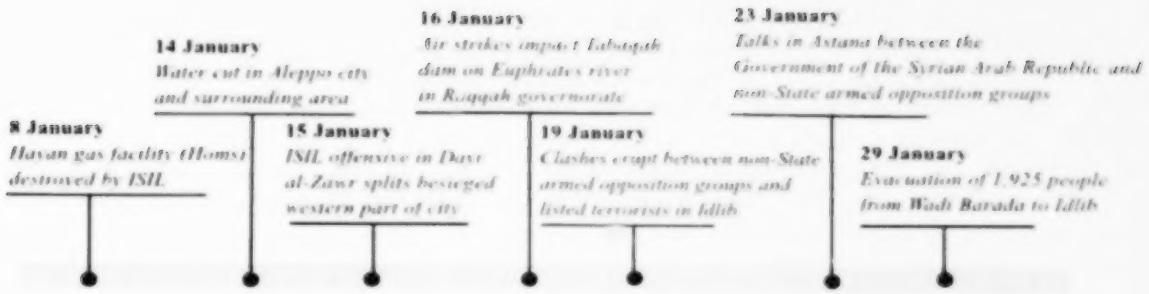
(6) Following a comprehensive review by the United Nations, it is now estimated that, as of the end of January 2017, some 643,780 people are living in 13 areas under siege.

II. Major developments

3. The beginning of 2017 saw a notable reduction in military activity across many parts of the country, although alleged attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure continued to be reported, in particular in Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Homs, Idlib, Raqqah and Rif Dimashq. The decrease in violence was primarily attributable to the implementation of a ceasefire that went into effect on 30 December. The ceasefire does not include fighting against United Nations-designated terrorist organizations or in Kurdish areas, and military operations against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in particular continued throughout the month (see figure I).

4. The ceasefire was further discussed at a meeting in Astana on 23 January between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and 13 non-State armed opposition groups, in the presence of the ceasefire guarantors, the Russian Federation and Turkey, in addition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States of America, the host country, Kazakhstan, and the United Nations. Following the meeting, a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire was announced by the Russian Federation, Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Figure I
Key dates in January 2017


8 January
Havan gas facility (Homs) destroyed by ISIL
14 January
Water cut in Aleppo city and surrounding area
15 January
ISIL offensive in Deir al-Zawr splits besieged western part of city
16 January
Air strikes impact Tabaqah dam on Euphrates river in Raqqah governorate
19 January
Clashes erupt between non-State armed opposition groups and listed terrorists in Idlib
23 January
Talks in Astana between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups
29 January
Evacuation of 1,925 people from Wadi Barada to Idlib

5. Sustained fighting took place during the month in Wadi Barada, in Rif Dimashq. Dozens of civilians were killed and injured after the fighting escalated on 23 December. An estimated 17,500 people were displaced during that time, mostly to Rawdah, Takiyah, the Zabadani plain and Dimas areas. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), in conjunction with the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian partners, continues to respond to the needs of the displaced. Following several failed agreements, on 28 January a ceasefire was reached between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups. On 29 January, 1,925 fighters and family members evacuated to Idlib.

6. Following the agreement, repair teams were able to enter the water facility in the area to assess the damage and undertake some initial repairs. Initial assessments showed the damage to be extensive, both at several water sources and within the water supply network. Technicians have been able to channel some water to Damascus, satisfying up to 60 per cent of the normal demand, but further maintenance is required to ensure continued water access. Longer term rehabilitation of the system is expected to be completed before the summer (see box 2 for more details on the situation in Wadi Barada).

Box 2
Wadi Barada

(1) Wadi Barada (the Barada valley) is located in Rif Dimashq, some 25 km north-west of the capital. Some 55,000 people in need live in nine densely populated towns, among them a large population of internally displaced persons, from eastern Ghouta in particular. Prior to the recent ceasefire agreement and evacuation, the area had been under the control of non-State armed opposition groups.

(2) Wadi Barada contains the Ayn al-Fijah and Barada springs, the primary source of water supply for Damascus, representing 70 per cent of the water needs for the city. The water station that supplies the water is in Ain el-Fijah, and while it is a government establishment it has long been run by local employees who have continued to manage its operation since the start of the conflict. As part of negotiations with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, since 2012

maintenance teams have been given regular access to the facility and the valley has remained relatively secure.

(3) An initial agreement was reached on a ceasefire and to provide access to maintenance teams on 12 January. However, when technical teams comprising SARC and the water authorities entered the area for a preliminary assessment, the lead negotiator from Wadi Barada was assassinated. Fighting resumed and the assessment mission was suspended until a new agreement was reached on 28 January.

(4) The United Nations inter-agency convoys have been unable to deliver humanitarian assistance inside Wadi Barada since 2014. SARC delivered assistance to Wadi Barada for 26,000 beneficiaries on 3 July 2016. A United Nations inter-agency convoy approved on 9 November 2016 had to be aborted after it was blocked from entering the valley at a Government checkpoint.

7. An estimated 1.8 million inhabitants of Aleppo and the surrounding eastern countryside (including Manbij and Bab) also saw their running water cut on 14 January owing to a technical problem at the Khafsah water station in the far eastern part of the governorate. The station lies in ISIL-controlled territory and parties have not been able to negotiate access for repair teams. In the interim, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continues to provide fuel supplies for 100 deep wells (covering some 600,000 people) and provides emergency water trucking for another 400,000 people. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross, SARC and other humanitarian actors provide maintenance for 122 wells and provide additional water trucking services.

8. Beyond the hardship posed by the lack of water, the humanitarian situation for most civilians who had been affected by the earlier fighting in Aleppo city remains difficult and the unseasonably cold winter has further exacerbated their situation. In Aleppo, nearly 160,000 people have been at least temporarily displaced from formerly besieged neighbourhoods of eastern Aleppo city. Over half, nearly 82,000 people, either stayed behind in or have since returned to formerly besieged neighbourhoods of eastern Aleppo, with numbers expected to rise further. Most of those who have returned now live in damaged houses. They are scattered across various neighbourhoods, with Hannanu hosting the largest number of returnees.

9. In eastern Aleppo, food items, including the World Food Programme's daily provision of ready-to-eat parcels for 59,000 people and bread for 80,000 people, have been distributed by the United Nations and its partners. Communal kitchens provide hot meals for approximately 15,000 internally displaced persons on the basis of two meals per person per day. A total of seven mobile clinics and 12 mobile teams are providing medical services, including mental health care. While health facilities in eastern Aleppo require urgent rehabilitation, nine primary health clinics supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) aim to support over 35,000 people over the next three months. A protection partner working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is establishing permanent legal services focusing on civil documentation in Hannanu. UNICEF and partners have reached over 64,000 children and adults through a risk education campaign in 20 neighbourhoods that recently became accessible in eastern Aleppo.

Furthermore, with UNICEF support, local non-governmental organizations have launched the back-to-learning campaign, aiming to reach 15,000 children in eastern neighbourhoods of Aleppo city. Preparations are also ongoing for the rehabilitation of 20 schools in eastern Aleppo.

10. East of Aleppo, 5,077 people remain displaced in the Jibrin collective shelter. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that this displaced population includes over 100 pregnant women. Parts of the shelter are in need of rehabilitation, particularly winterization. To date, UNHCR has distributed 678 stoves, 500 boxes of expansion foams for insulation and has closed 620 upper windows. In cooperation with a local partner, UNICEF and UNHCR continue to provide heaters and firewood to the internally displaced persons sheltered in Jibrin industrial halls. Furthermore, the United Nations is supporting communal kitchens that provide hot meals for thousands and the distribution of regular bread bundles, including the daily distribution by WFP of bread for 5,000 people in need. WHO supports a static clinic in the shelter. Two UNHCR protection partners, in coordination with the relevant authorities, have also commenced the distribution of personal identification documents. UNFPA has reached 4,356 women with reproductive health services and 1,000 beneficiaries through services to respond to gender-based violence.

11. In Idlib and the western Aleppo countryside, rising tensions and fighting that began on 19 January between non-State armed opposition groups and United Nations-designated terrorist groups resulted in the temporary halt of humanitarian programming and civilian movement. As a result of the tension, fighters increased their presence around key towns and checkpoints were installed on major transit routes. Civilians and the humanitarian community were unable to move freely and a curfew was temporarily imposed in I'zaz. Many humanitarian agencies temporarily ceased operations and United Nations agencies also stopped cross-border deliveries through Bab al-Hawa border crossing point for one day.

12. The second phase of the anti-ISIL operation led by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqah continued, with intensified fighting reported during the month. Fighting and air strikes have had an impact on infrastructure, such as water and power stations, affecting people's ability to access basic services. On 16 January, an air strike reportedly hit the Tabaqah dam, which threatened to flood a large area, that could reach to Dayr al-Zawr, should the dam crack. Concerns about the dam were heightened when clashes were reported in the area in subsequent days. On 24 January, ISIL opened three turbines of the dam, flooding riverside areas downstream. Fighting and air strikes also resulted in the destruction of a bridge over the Euphrates on 31 January and of a number of smaller bridges over the main irrigation canal, which have increased restrictions on civilian movement in the area. In addition, two water stations in the western countryside were destroyed on 31 January. So far, some 35,000 people have been displaced as a result of the fighting, although many return to their homes once the fighting subsides. The majority of the population of Raqqah district are reportedly facing critical problems in meeting their immediate needs. Humanitarian partners are providing a response to those displaced to the north towards Tall Abyad. The United Nations and its partners are taking measures to ensure adequate planning is in place and supplies are on hand to respond to further humanitarian concerns as a result of the offensive against Raqqah.

13. An ISIL offensive on Dayr al-Zawr that began on 15 January has effectively cut the besieged enclave in the western part of the city in two. Scores have been injured by the fighting and at least 97 people assessed as having critical medical cases are in urgent need of evacuation. The fighting resulted in the separation of the Dayr al-Zawr airport and two eastern neighbourhoods, populated by an estimated 6,000 people, from the rest of the western neighbourhoods, where the remainder of the 93,500 besieged population reside. WFP airdrops were halted between 15 and 28 January, during which time SARC distributed all remaining WFP food stocks. On 17 and 18 January, Russian forces airlifted bread sufficient for two days by helicopter, feeding over 20,000 civilians. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was airlifting limited supplies into the besieged areas, as was a private company that made its goods available for sale. A new safe drop zone was identified, however, and on 29 January airdrops resumed.

14. The offensive by ISIL on eastern rural Homs, which fell back under ISIL control in December, reportedly resulted in the destruction of the Hayan gas facility on 8 January. The facility was used to provide daily gas supplies for several electricity stations. It is expected that the already struggling energy sector will see further rationing of electricity and higher prices for cooking gas as a result.

15. The United Nations and its partners continue to deliver to those along the berm on the Jordanian-Syrian border. United Nations operational agencies completed the first cycle of distribution for 15,519 families at the berm on 14 January and some 195 patients received medical treatment at a new service facility, which began operations on 15 December 2016. An additional 21 cases have been referred and admitted to Ruwayshid Hospital inside Jordan.

Protection issues

16. The protection of civilians has been consistently identified as a significant area of concern in all governorates across the Syrian Arab Republic, with some 13.5 million people in need of protection and assistance. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including against medical personnel and facilities as well as against schools, education staff and schoolchildren, continued to be reported in January. Threats from explosive ordnance, threats against women and the most vulnerable civilians, such as children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as other violations and human rights abuses, were also reported.

17. On the basis of information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the reported killing of civilians and other abuses and violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law continued throughout the reporting period. Violence occurred in locations including Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Homs, Idlib, Raqqah and Rif Dimashq governorates (see table 1 for a list of reported civilian casualties recorded by OHCHR). OHCHR documented alleged incidents by all parties to the conflict, including Government forces, non-State armed opposition groups and United Nations-designated terrorist groups.

18. In addition to violations documented by OHCHR, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic provided OHCHR with information on alleged violations. In a note verbale dated 13 January, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic provided OHCHR with information and photographs relating to the reported

discovery on 23 December 2016 of 23 bodies in Muhaddathah school in the Sukkari area of Aleppo, 14 of whom were identified as members of the Syrian armed forces and 6 as auxiliary forces allied to the Government. It also noted that on 24 December 2016, the Government discovered a further 37 unidentified bodies in Sukkari. The note added that the majority of the bodies bore marks indicating that the individuals had died as a result of having their throats cut, gunshots to the head, or severe blows to their heads and faces, and that many bore signs of having been tortured.

Table 1
Reported attacks against civilians, January 2017[a]

Date	*Location*	*Type of attack*	*Number of people killed, including women and children*	*Number of people injured*	*Infrastructure or site type*
Aleppo governorate					
1 January	Bab	Ground strike	At least 7, including 2 children	3	–
3 January	Biza'ah	Ground strike	At least 4, including 1 child	20	–
5 January	Bab	Ground strike	2, including 1 child	15	–
7 January	I'zaz	Suicide bomber	At least 50 (fighters and civilians)	More than 100 (fighters and civilians)	Market
11 January	Aleppo	Ground strike	–	13	Residential
13 January	Tadif and Bab	Air and ground strikes	12, including 1 woman	18	–
14 January	Bab	Bomb	3, including 1 woman and 1 child	–	City outskirts
22 January	Bab	Ground strike	6, including 1 woman and 3 children	At least 15	Residential
23 January	Bab	Landmine	1 woman and 1 child	–	–
23 January	Tadif	Air strike	12, including 2 women and 1 child	–	Residential
25 January	Tadif	Air strike	2 children	–	–
26 January	Bab	Ground strike	2 women and 2 children	–	–
26 January	Aleppo	Ground strike	1	1	Residential
27 January	Biza'ah	Air strike	1 woman and 5 children	–	Residential
28 January	Bab	Air and ground strikes	7, including 1 woman and 5 children	–	Residential

Date	*Location*	*Type of attack*	*Number of people killed, including women and children*	*Number of people injured*	*Infrastructure or site type*
Dayr al-Zawr governorate					
7 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Ground strike	1 woman	6	Residential
7 January	Khusham desert area	Air strike	19	At least 15	Oil refinery
9 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Ground strike	2, including 1 child	–	Residential
11 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Ground strike	1	–	Residential
14 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Ground strike	2	–	Residential
15 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Air strike	At least 6, including 2 women and 3 children	–	Residential
20 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Ground strike	6, including 1 woman and 1 child	–	Residential
20 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Air strike	3	–	Residential
24 January	Salihiyah	Air strike	12	At least 40	Factory
25 January	Dayr al-Zawr city	Ground strike	1 woman	12, including 1 woman and 1 child	–
Homs governorate					
22 January	Hulah	Air strike	8, including 5 children	–	Residential
Idlib governorate					
3 January	Sarmada	Air strike	24 (including civilians and fighters)	–	Court and detention centre
7 January	Abu al-Zuhur	Air strike	At least 4	More than 5	Market
12 January	Binnish	Air strike	3, including 1 child	At least 27	Residential and market
13 January	Urum al-Jawz	Air strike	6, including 2 children	–	Residential
14 January	Ma'arratmisrin	Air strike	7, including 1 child	–	Residential
22 January	Nayrab	Air strike	5	–	Residential
22 January	Fu'ah	Ground strike	1 child	–	Residential
23 January	Fu'ah	Ground strike	1 child	3, including 2 children	Residential

Date	*Location*	*Type of attack*	*Number of people killed, including women and children*	*Number of people injured*	*Infrastructure or site type*
28 January	Qaminas	Gunshot	1	–	–
30 January	Idlib city	Air strike	1	7	Residential
30 January	Idlib city	Air strike	–	1	Veterinary school
Raqqah governorate					
6 January	Suwaydiyah Kabirah	Air strike	At least 9, including 1 woman and 6 children	3	Residential
7 January	Dab'an	Air strike	At least 4	–	Residential
Rif Dimashq governorate					
3 January	Wadi Barada	Ground strike	4, including 1 woman	2	Residential
6 January	Misraba	Ground strike	2	–	–

Source: OHCHR.

[a] In line with resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of developments on the ground relates to the compliance with resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Cessation of Hostilities of the International Syria Support Group. The list is not exhaustive.

19. The United States Department of Defense publicly confirmed that in January, the United States-led coalition carried out 513 strikes against ISIL targets in the governorates of Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah, Homs, Idlib and Raqqah. This represents a near doubling of the air strikes conducted during the previous month. The Department of Defense publicly confirmed that 331 strikes were launched around Raqqah in January, with strikes carried out on a daily basis (apart from 27 January), and that 90 strikes were launched around Dayr al-Zawr in January, with strikes on nearly every day of the month. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation issued several statements on strikes launched against ISIL forces in Dayr al-Zawr as well as around the area of Bab in Aleppo governorate. The Ministry did not publish any total figures on the numbers of strikes carried out during January. Turkish media reported that Free Syrian Army fighters supported by Turkey, elements of the international coalition and other partners continued operations against ISIL as part of the Turkish military operation known as "Euphrates Shield".

20. Following the takeover by Government forces of formerly besieged areas of Aleppo city, an unknown number of persons remain missing. While reports indicate that some chose not to contact their families and others of military age may have been wanted for military service and conscripted into the Syrian armed forces, concerns remain that some may have been arbitrarily detained or killed. There were also reports that some captured Government soldiers and members of pro-Government militias were killed by non-State armed opposition groups.

21. In a number of instances, human rights abuses perpetrated by ISIL involving children were reported, in many cases with evidence provided by footage released through social media channels believed by OHCHR to be associated with ISIL. A video released on 8 January showed three children killing three adult men in Dayr al-Zawr. One of the children was reported as being aged 13, and the other two, whose age is not indicated, appear to be younger. A video released on 23 January showed children in Raqqah killing six men. Photographs released on 28 January appeared to show children undergoing military and religious training in the ISIL-held Hajar al-Aswad suburb of Damascus. In another incident, an 18-year-old woman was allegedly placed in a cage in a public place in Raqqah city for 24 hours on 14 January as punishment for not wearing full Islamic dress.

22. In blatant disregard for the protected status of medical facilities under international humanitarian law, further articulated by the Security Council in its resolution 2286 (2016), such facilities continued to be damaged or destroyed as a result of fighting. The United Nations and health partners received credible reports of seven attacks against medical facilities in January. Primary, secondary and tertiary health-care services continued to experience severe gaps in performance and service delivery, owing to the extensive damage caused to health facilities, the rapid turnover of health-care staff and the lack of qualified professionals in different specialized medical fields. Paediatric and maternal health services, including routine vaccinations, remained negatively affected.

23. Educational facilities continued to be subject to a number of attacks during January. Two attacks on education facilities were reported by the United Nations during the reporting period. On 5 January, the school complex of Abdullah Rajab primary school and Al-Quds secondary school, located in I'zaz (rural Aleppo), were damaged due to a car bomb near the school complex. No children were in the school at the time of the incident. On 6 January, a school located in Jabal al-Hass (rural Aleppo), was hit by air strikes, causing extensive damage to the school. There were no children in the school at the time of the attack.

Humanitarian access

Box 3
Key points regarding humanitarian access

(1) Following a comprehensive review by the United Nations, it is now estimated that as of the end of January 2017, some 643,780 people are living in 13 areas under siege. The eastern districts of Aleppo, Mu'addamiyah al-Sham and Hajar al-Aswad have been formally removed from the United Nations list of besieged locations/areas, while no new locations were added. In addition, some 4 million people are living in hard-to-reach areas.

(2) One inter-agency mission reached Mu'addamiyah al-Sham, on 7 January, which had been approved on an exceptional basis under the November plan, with multisectoral assistance for 40,000 people in need. However, no inter-agency convoys were completed under the January plan.

(3) During the reporting period, some 686,585 beneficiaries were assisted with food commodities by the United Nations and its partners through cross-border operations from Turkey and Jordan. Planned cross-border operations to Idlib were

affected by fighting among non-State armed opposition groups and United Nations-designated terrorist groups. Deliveries from Turkey to Idlib experienced minor delays, with some shipments postponed by a few days, owing to the security situation and movement restrictions. By 31 January, however, all planned deliveries had taken place.

(4) A total of 518,700 beneficiaries of the 675,250 requested beneficiaries (76.8 per cent) in the February 2017 plan were approved. One location, Hajar al-Aswad in Rif Dimashq governorate, was denied and another, Jawbar, was not included among the approved locations.

24. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need in the Syrian Arab Republic remained extremely challenging in many areas of the country as a result of active conflict, shifting conflict lines and deliberate restrictions on the movement of people and goods by the parties to the conflict.

25. Following a comprehensive review by the United Nations, it is now estimated that as of January 2017 some 643,780 people are living in 13 areas under siege (see table 2). Three locations were removed from the previous list of 16 locations, where some 974,080 people had been under conditions of besiegement: unable to move freely, unable to access adequate humanitarian assistance and militarily encircled. The eastern neighbourhoods of Aleppo were removed following their complete takeover by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in December. Mu'addamiyah al-Sham in Rif Dimashq was delisted as a result of the improvement in humanitarian access and freedom of movement over the past three months, following the signing and subsequent implementation of a local agreement. Hajar al-Aswad, also in Rif Dimashq, was removed owing to the access that had become available through neighbouring Yalda and Al-Qadam. Further, population figures have been adjusted for other locations on the basis of the latest and most accurate information received. This includes a reduction of 1,200 people for Fu'ah and Kafraya in Idlib, following their evacuation from the two towns in December. Adjustments were also made for areas in the eastern Ghutah enclave as a result of movements within the enclave, as well as for Zabadani and Khan al-Shih. In addition to besieged locations, some 4 million people are in hard-to-reach locations.

Table 2
Besieged locations, January 2017

Governorate	*Location*	*Population*	*Besieged by*
Damascus	Yarmuk	9 800	Goverament of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups
Dayr al-Zawr	Dayr al-Zawr city (Government-held neighbourhoods)	93 500	ISIL
Homs	Homs (Wa'r)	50 000	Government
Idlib	Fu'ah	12 200	non-State armed opposition groups

Governorate	*Location*	*Population*	*Besieged by*
Idlib	Kafraya	6 600	non-State armed opposition groups
Rif Dimashq	Khan al-Shih	6 000	Government
Rif Dimashq/ Damascus	Irbin and surrounding area (Irbin, Zamalka and Jawbar)	53 000	Government
Rif Dimashq	Harasta area (Harasta, Mudayra and Misraba)	45 000	Government
Rif Dimashq	Duma area (Duma, Shaffuniyah and Hawsh al-Dawahirah)	161 400	Government
Rif Dimashq	Kafr Batna area (Kafr Batna, Saqba, Ayn Tarma, Hammurah, Jisrayn, Aftris, Hazzah, Hawsh al-Ash'ari, Bayt Siwa and Muhammadiyah)	142 840	Government
Rif Dimashq	Nashabiyah area (Nashabiyah, Bayt Nayim, Salihiyah, Utaya and Hazrama)	17 590	Government
Rif Dimashq	Madaya (and Buqayn)	45 700	Government
Rif Dimashq	Zabadani	150	Government
Total		**643 780**	

26. Access to the millions of people living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remains of critical concern. Only one inter-agency convoy proceeded in January (see figures II and III), delivering assistance to 40,000 people in Mu'addamiyah al-Sham on 7 January. The convoy was approved and dispatched, on an exceptional basis, under the November inter-agency convoy plan. No inter-agency convoys were completed under the January plan. Principal obstacles included insecurity, lack of administrative approvals and disagreement among parties to the Four Towns agreement. Meanwhile, reports received indicate that a number of people were evacuated from Wa'r to a hospital in Homs city. These are reportedly the first medical evacuations to take place from Wa'r in the past two months, while there has been an increase in military activity. Previously, reports had emerged that civilians in critical medical conditions had died as they had been unable to access the required care. In addition, amid continued humanitarian and commercial access constraints, local non-governmental organizations identified malnutrition cases among young children in Wa'r in January. The United Nations continues to appeal for access to the besieged area.

27. During the reporting period, United Nations agencies also undertook single-agency deliveries to cross-line and hard-to-reach locations or reached those locations through their regular programmes. Moreover, non-governmental organizations continued to provide medical, education and protection services, as well as some support in other sectors, in hard-to-reach locations, under extremely challenging circumstances.

Figure II

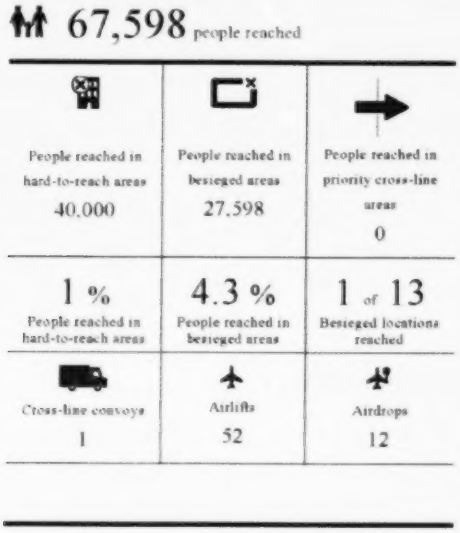
United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations: number of people reached each month in besieged areas, including via airdrops to Dayr al-Zawr city

(Thousands)

28. Deliberate interference and restrictions by the parties to the conflict continued to prevent aid delivery. The majority of United Nations agencies and their partners continue to be unable to access populations in need in ISIL-controlled areas of the country, as all plans to deliver assistance to those areas have been suspended owing to the organizations being prevented from working independently and monitoring activities. This is preventing WFP from reaching Raqqah and most of Dayr al-Zawr governorate, as well as pockets of northern rural Aleppo, southern rural Hasakah, north-western rural Hama and eastern rural Homs. Moreover, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been unable to return to Yalda/Yarmuk since 25 May 2016, owing to security concerns on the ground.

29. Humanitarian operations were affected in Idlib governorate during January as a result of ongoing fighting among non-State armed opposition groups. On 12 January, a WFP partner reported that seven trucks were confiscated on their way to Sarmada town in Idlib governorate by armed men, allegedly belonging to Jabhat Fath al-Sham. On 13 January, the seven confiscated trucks were released following extensive negotiations.

Figure III
United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations (January 2017)



30. The removal of life-saving medicines and medical supplies from humanitarian aid convoys continued in January. Life-saving and life-sustaining medical items sufficient for 20,200 treatments were removed from the convoy to Mu'addamiyah al-Sham. The treatments and supplies removed are shown in table 3. The table does not include medical supplies that were scheduled to be delivered as part of the monthly inter-agency convoy plan, which was unable to proceed. Furthermore, since the beginning of 2017, WHO has submitted one request to the Syrian Government to access two locations in Rif Dimashq. The request remains unanswered.

Table 3
Medical supplies removed from humanitarian convoys in January 2017

Location	*Number of treatments*	*Type of supplies*
Mu'addamiyah al-Sham	20 200	Surgical kits, midwifery kits, basic X-ray machines, injectable analgesics, bottles of analgesics/antipyretics and items to treat 200 trauma cases

31. Under the United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for January, access was requested to 21 locations, including besieged locations, with the aim of reaching 914,000 people. In their response on 29 December, the Syrian authorities approved access to 697,700 of those 914,000 requested beneficiaries (76.3 per cent, in full or in part). A total of 216,300 beneficiaries (23.7 per cent) requested under the plan were denied or not included in the approved number of beneficiaries. No beneficiaries were reached by convoys that were initially authorized under the January plan.

32. On 19 January, the United Nations submitted the February inter-agency convoy plan, which comprised requests to reach 675,250 people in need across 20 besieged, hard-to-reach and priority cross-line areas, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On 1 February, the Ministry responded, with a total of 518,700 of the 675,250 requested beneficiaries (76.8 per cent) in the February plan approved (in full or in part). 156,550 beneficiaries (23.2 per cent) requested under the February plan were not included in the approved number of beneficiaries. One request, to Hajar al-Aswad in Rif Dimashq, was denied and another location, Jawbar, was not mentioned among the approved locations.

33. On 11 January, the United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator in Damascus sent a note verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a list of practical suggestions to speed up access, simplify procedures and ensure the movement of convoys.

34. The Nusaybin/Qamishli crossing in Hasakah governorate has been temporarily closed by the Turkish authorities since 27 December 2015, because of security concerns. Hasakah governorate also remains largely inaccessible by road for United Nations agencies from within the Syrian Arab Republic owing to insecurity and the presence of ISIL along the routes. The United Nations continues with airlifts from Damascus to Qamishli airport to deliver multisectoral assistance.

Humanitarian response

35. In January, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need through all modalities from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders (see table 4). In addition to the United Nations and partners, non-governmental organizations also continued to deliver valuable assistance to people in need, in line with previous months. The Government continued to provide basic services to those areas under its control as well as in many areas beyond its control.

Table 4
Number of people reached by United Nations organizations, January 2017

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	35 742
International Organization for Migration	99 306
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	240 000
United Nations Children's Fund	3 200 000
United Nations Development Programme	2 142 850
United Nations Population Fund	164 833
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	169 380
World Food Programme	3 556 270
World Health Organization	612 166

36. Almost 82,000 people are estimated to have returned to the formerly besieged parts of eastern Aleppo city since late December. The area is now accessible to the

United Nations and partners and returnees are receiving humanitarian assistance. In addition, the 36,000 people who were evacuated from Aleppo to Idlib are now part of the regular cross-border humanitarian programming that assists some 900,000 internally displaced persons in Idlib.

37. In response to the water crisis in Damascus and Aleppo, the United Nations and partners, led by UNICEF, scaled up the daily provision of trucked water to 8 million litres per day, reaching an estimated 1 million people, including internally displaced persons in eastern Aleppo neighbourhoods, 25 shelters for internally displaced persons and 144 schools, as well as water trucking to schools (120 schools, benefiting 110,000 children) and to settlements for internally displaced persons (benefiting 40,000 people) in Damascus.

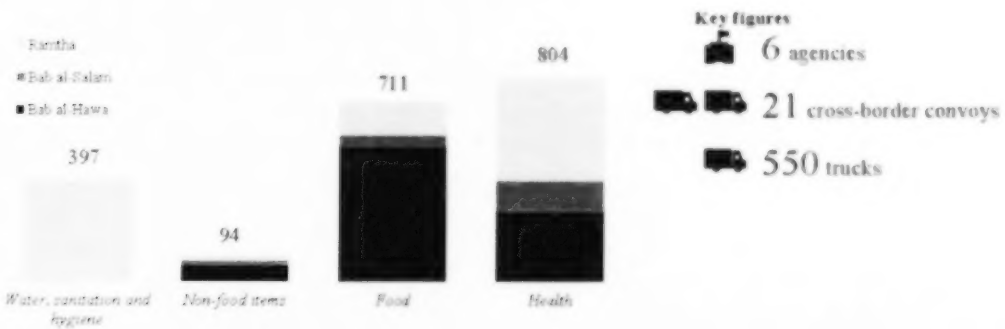
38. In January, UNHCR submitted 73 facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits within the Syrian Arab Republic. All were approved. As a result, UNHCR reached a total of 240,006 individuals with core relief items, including 15,000 people in hard-to-reach areas.

39. During the reporting period, cross-border deliveries continued from Turkey and Jordan into the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (see figure IV). In accordance with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its content, destination and number of beneficiaries. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations, monitoring 550 trucks used in 21 convoys in January, confirming the humanitarian nature of each and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment. The Mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

Figure IV

Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners per cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, January 2017

(Thousands)



40. The inter-agency convoy to the besieged location of Mu'addamiyah al-Sham (see table 5) was completed on 7 January. In addition, during January, WFP completed 11 airdrop rotations to Dayr al-Zawr city, airdropping sufficient

quantities for 25,650 people to receive a full food ration. As of 31 January, 179 airdrop rotations had been conducted since the start of the operation in April 2016, airdropping a total of 3,318 tons of WFP mixed food commodities, fortified date bars, salt and yeast, as well as supplies on behalf of other humanitarian actors, in support of all 93,500 people in need. As of 31 January, 299 airlift rotations to Qamishli have been completed since July 2016, airlifting a total of 10,165 tons of WFP food and other supplies on behalf of other humanitarian actors.

Table 5
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys, January 2017

Date	*Location*	*Requested target (number of beneficiaries)*	*Targeted people reached*	*Type of assistance*
7 January	Mu'addamiyah al-Sham	40 000	40 000	Multisectoral

41. In January 2017, WHO and partners conducted a 10-day measles immunization campaign in response to 12 cases of measles reported in Shamarih camp of I'zaz district, Aleppo governorate. As of 1 February, 6,591 children aged between 6 months and 15 years of age had been reached, out of a total target of 9,000 children.

Visas and registrations

42. A total of 63 new visa requests were submitted in January. A total of 25 of those applications were approved, 4 new visa requests were rejected and 34 new visa requests remain pending, in addition to a further 3 from previous months. A total of 57 visa renewal requests were submitted in January, of which 9 remain pending and 48 were approved. One further visa renewal remains pending from previous months, while 4 visa renewal requests from previous months were approved in January.

43. A total of 17 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government to operate in the country. Four additional international non-governmental organizations are in the process of completing registration. Those organizations continued to face a series of administrative hurdles and restrictions that affect their ability to operate, including in gaining permission to undertake independent needs assessments. Some 210 national non-governmental organizations are authorized to operate in the Syrian Arab Republic, including 4 national organizations that were added in January.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

44. On 1 February, an air strike on the Carlton Hotel in Idlib city damaged the administrative offices of the Idlib branch of SARC. The president of the branch was injured in the attack.

45. A total of 28 United Nations staff members, 27 of whom are UNRWA staff and 1 from the United Nations Development Programme, are still detained or missing. Since the start of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 20 staff members of the United Nations, of whom 17 were UNRWA staff members. Among those killed were also 64 staff members and volunteers of the

Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. In addition, many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations are reported to have been killed.

III. Observations

46. I welcome the ceasefire, which took effect on 30 December and which has provided some important relief across parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. This contributes to the creation of an environment conducive to the reconvening of intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva in late February.

47. I am concerned, however, by ongoing violence and fighting caused by breaches of the ceasefire, which have resulted in numerous casualties. I am also concerned that the ceasefire has not resulted in an increase in humanitarian access for the United Nations and its partners. As violence diminishes, there is even less reason why the full access plan agreed with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic should not be implemented. January was the first month, since the institution of the International Syria Support Group and its Humanitarian Task Force, during which not a single inter-agency cross-line convoy from the convoy plan for the month was deployed. I urge all Member States with influence, especially those on the Security Council, to ensure that such a zero implementation rate does not occur again. The United Nations and its partners are ready and capable of delivering humanitarian assistance in challenging conditions to hundreds of thousands of those most in need every month, in addition to regular and cross-border programming supporting millions. We must be given the chance to do so, as the lives of many depend upon regular and unimpeded deliveries of humanitarian assistance.

48. It also remains a concern that beyond the ceasefire, fighting against United Nations-designated terrorist groups continues to result in civilian casualties and suffering. In January, fighting by non-State armed opposition groups and United Nations-designated terrorist groups in Idlib resulted in restricted humanitarian programming and civilian movement. ISIL has continued to destroy infrastructure, such as bridges, as it retreats both in far eastern Homs and around Raqqah. Air strikes and fighting around both Raqqah and Bab are resulting in civilian casualties, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and displacement. Bearing in mind that civilians trapped in areas controlled by United Nations-designated terrorist groups are already facing human rights abuses and humanitarian suffering, efforts to retake such areas must be undertaken with the utmost care for the plight of the civilians living.

49. In January, the number of people besieged decreased again and now stands at 643,780. The United Nations has long called for a complete and immediate end, by all parties, to tactics such as sieges, which impose intolerable suffering on civilians. It is important to recognize the reductions in the number of people besieged that have occurred over the past few months following military advances and subsequent agreements bringing areas (eastern Aleppo, Mu'addamiyah al-Sham and Hajar al-Aswad) back under Government control, after protracted periods of restrictions on aid, as well as heavy fighting and bombing. I reiterate that besiegement tactics, which do nothing other than punish civilians, must be brought to an end.

50. The Syrian conflict continues to feature attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure with seeming impunity. I strongly believe that the lack of respect for international human rights and humanitarian law must be brought to an end. I note, in this regard, the importance of the establishment, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/248, of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. I also reiterate my call for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court. Efforts to ensure a proper framework for transitional justice and reconciliation are elements necessary for durable peace and for the Syrian Arab Republic to overcome the horrors of war.

51. I look forward to the intra-Syrian negotiations, to be convened by my Special Envoy, in Geneva, which I expect to build further on the impetus of the meeting held in Astana. I welcome the positive role that the conveners of that meeting and its host, Kazakhstan, played. Looking ahead, the convening of intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva should be an important step to a peaceful solution to the conflict that fulfils the aspirations of the Syrian people, based on the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012, as endorsed by the Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013), 2254 (2015), 2268 (2016) and 2336 (2016). In this regard, it is critical that the negotiating parties come to Geneva without preconditions and with serious intent to end the conflict. Building peace will depend upon political compromise. I continue to count on the constructive engagement by the Syrian parties, with the support of international and regional partners, to assure Syrians that an end to the conflict is finally near, at long last.